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SUBJECT: POST-2011 SOUTHERN INDEPENDENCE COULD LEAVE KHARTOUM IDP'S
VULNERABLE TO VIOLENCE

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: Little attention is being paid to the mechanics of an initially non-violent break-up if, as widely expected, Southern Sudan votes for independence in the 2011 referendum. Several IDP experts have raised the possibility that Northern anger towards Southerners could be directed at the large - and vulnerable - community of Southern IDPs resident in the Khartoum area. Such a reaction would probably set off a round of retaliatory violence in the South against the large Northern trader community there. Our contacts cite the unhappy examples of the violence that accompanied Eritrea's independence from Ethiopia, the India/Pakistan partition, and the violence directed against Northern traders in Juba when Southern Sudanese leader (and Sudan First Vice President) John Garang was killed in a 2005 helicopter crash, to warn that the country could degenerate into violence as a result of the referendum. However, this will depend on the way Northern and Southern political leaders handle the referendum and possible secession. Some in the North, even in the NCP, say they would be happy to see the South secede. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) In considering the situation of the Southern IDP population in the Khartoum area, Poloff spoke with Mission IDP Specialist, Deacon Kamal Said Samaan, the Khartoum Catholic archdiocese's IDP expert (and national secretary of the Sudanese St Vincent De Paul Society, an international Catholic NGO); and a collection of IDP community leaders, at a meeting in Khartoum facilitated by CARE.

PICTURE OF KHARTOUM'S IDP COMMUNITY

¶3. (U) These experts agreed that, currently, there is no clear statistical picture of the remaining IDP community in the Khartoum area, because no studies have been carried out lately. Many people have gone back to the south as "voluntary returnees" (at their own expense) since studies were last done. However, these returns have not been tracked. There is a steady stream of people moving South, but many then return to Khartoum because of the capital's better economic opportunities, and the much poorer infrastructure, health conditions, and educational opportunities for their children in the South. Non-Muslim Southern Sudanese are now found in every Northern town up to the Egyptian border. Additionally, there is a stream of Southerners who are not classified as IDPs, but rather move north as economic migrants, or due to inter-tribal tensions in the South. Also, the recent violence in Abyei sent a new wave of IDPs to Khartoum, although some of these have started to return.

¶4. (U) The flow of IDPs to Khartoum dates back to about 1985, with the first cycle of drought, especially from Kordofan and Darfur. A second wave began in the 1990s, mostly as a result of the war in Southern Sudan. At its peak, around 2003, there were some two million IDPs in the Khartoum area, of some four million nationwide. Only a small number of the estimated 2.5 million displaced by the Darfur conflict that began in 2004, most of whom remained in camps there, came to Khartoum. The United Nations Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) estimates that some 2.1 million IDPs have returned

nationwide, as a result of organized or voluntary returns. Some 30-35 percent of that total returned to the Three Areas (Abyei, Nuba Mountains, Blue Nile), and the rest to the South. Our contacts estimated that some two million IDPs may remain in the Khartoum area, many of them as "squatters," who do not have legal rights to the land upon which they reside.

¶15. (U) Four IDP camps are situated in the Khartoum area - two in Omdurman (across the Nile River from the capital of Khartoum) and two on the Khartoum side of the river, but further out in the countryside. The two camps in Omdurman have largely been absorbed by the growth of that city, and its residents have to various degrees been integrated into the local economy, to the extent that some resent being referred to as "IDPs." People familiar with the IDP camps say the camps are notably less crowded than in the past as a result of returns; however, it is difficult to quantify the remaining IDP population.

INTENTIONS OF KHARTOUM'S IDPS

¶16. (U) The IOM (International Organization for Migration) carried out an "intention survey" of Sudan's IDPs in 2006. That study revealed that some 60% of interviewees eventually wanted to return to the South or to the Three Areas; about 11% were undecided; with the remaining quarter indicating they wanted to be integrated where they were. The IDPs that remain in Khartoum will continue to face a number of challenges that require longer-term development approaches instead of emergency relief activities. The Sudanese government continues to limit access to the IDP camps and closely controls the kinds of assistance provided to these areas. (Note: In August, USAID was denied camp permits to assess flood damage in IDP areas

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and informed that donors have to apply for permits to camps through implementing partners. End Note.)

¶17. (U) At a meeting with IDP community leaders in Khartoum on September 7, a woman from Eastern Equatoria said members of her community are "tired of Khartoum, and they want to go back." Most of the community registered for voluntary return in 2005, but since then, she added, "the IOM hasn't helped. We are very frustrated. Many people are trying to raise money to return on their own." Several of the other leaders seconded those sentiments, expressing frustration that the expected assistance from IOM has not materialized. (Note: In FY 2007 and FY 2008, USAID funded the organized return program through IOM. The organized return program is geared to assist the most vulnerable IDPs to return home, particularly to remote areas. IOM prioritizes organized return routes based on a number of criteria, including safety of the return destination, number of registered families, and route security. While it is not uncommon to hear complaints about unmet expectations for assistance, IOM is providing a critical service through its organized return operation and helping many people return to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas. End Note.)

PROSPECT OF VIOLENCE IN 2011?

¶18. (U) When asked what they expected might happen in 2011, should the South vote for independence, none of the IDP leaders raised the possibility of violence. Several said that as Sudanese, they have the right to live wherever they want to in Sudan, and they expected that situation to continue even past 2011, regardless of the vote.

¶19. (U) However, both of the two IDP experts agreed that an outbreak of hostility and violence was a distinct possibility. The Mission's IDP expert said he hoped political leaders from both sides would show wisdom and restraint in the future, but the example of Eritrean independence from Ethiopia after the UN-supervised referendum in 1993 led him to believe there was a danger of violence. In a recent meeting with econoff, the World Bank Country Manager, a Pakistani national, compared the failure to plan for a post-2011 breakup to the similar failure to plan adequately for the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947 and said it was likely to lead to similar, horrific results.

¶10. (SBU) Deacon Kamal Samaan (protect) of the Catholic diocese of Khartoum was much blunter in saying that he believed an outbreak of violence against the Southern IDP community was quite probable. He stressed that many Northerners - and the deacon being a Northern Arab Christian - harbor great hostility for Southerners, basically still thinking of them as "slaves" and "infidels," he said. He stated flatly that "Sudan will never accept secession" of the South; renewed warfare was one possibility, as well as inter-communal violence, he said.

¶11. (U) Samaan said that if the infrastructure improves in the South in the run-up to the 2011 referendum, that most Southerners would return. However, he added that because of widespread corruption and inter-tribal tensions in the South, he did not expect the Southern infrastructure to improve to any appreciable degree before 2011. Samaan also emphasized that Sudan's "islamization" campaign remains in full force, despite the North's commitment in the CPA to protect the rights of non-Muslims in Khartoum: children have to study Islam in public schools; Christians are prevented from building new churches in the North; many Southern IDP women are in prison for brewing alcohol. He noted his office had recently been successful in getting the death sentence commuted for a Southern Christian woman convicted of adultery. Islamic intolerance will only increase if the regime will no longer need to pay lip service to the SPLM and CPA after 2011.

COMMENT

¶12. (SBU) The parties to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and their international partners are only beginning to consider the implications of the likelihood that the South will vote for separation in the referendum in 2011. Under prodding from some members of the international community, there is minimal attention to the possibility of working out a post-2011 oil revenue sharing agreement. However, numerous other questions - the status and security of Southerners living in the north and Northerners in the south not the least of them - remain to be resolved in the rapidly diminishing time remaining. Encouraging the two sides to think about these issues now will not only help avert political violence in 2011 if the South does choose independence, but also may serve to make the referendum itself less threatening as it approaches.

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Unfortunately, as always in Sudan, there are simply too many simultaneous crises that require constant tending and negotiation, and prevent Sudan's leaders from planning ahead on other difficult but critical long-term issues. While many in Sudan believe that secession is inevitable and many in the North tell us they would even welcome it, much will depend on the political environment in 2011 and how Sudan's leaders plan for and respond to these challenges.

FERNANDEZ